



Pan-European Coalition of Environmental Citizens Organisations



6th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

BELGRADE, 10-12 October 2007

BIODIVERSITY SESSION PROPOSAL

Multi-stakeholder discussion jointly organised by the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) and European ECO-Forum (ECO-Forum)

Co-Chairs: Minister of Environment, Norway and a senior NGO representative (to be confirmed)

Secretariats: UNEP and Council of Europe/PEBLDS, European ECO-Forum/NGOs

Topic: 2010 Biodiversity Targets: Review of the Kiev commitments

Introduction

The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) is primarily a forum for governments, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to promote, coordinate and implement national and regional actions to conserve and sustainably use biological diversity in the pan-European region. The PEBLDS was endorsed by the Ministers of Environment from 49 countries in the UN ECE region (Europe, North America, Central Asia) and the Representative of the European Commission, when they met at Sofia, Bulgaria, from 23 to 25 October 1995. The European ECO Forum (ECO-Forum) is a broad, inclusive coalition of more than 200 environmental citizens organizations as well as NGOs with related scope, participating in the official pan-European processes (Environment for Europe, Environment & Health, Environment & Agriculture etc.) with the final goal of promoting sustainable development in pan-Europe and globally. The goal of the coalition is to serve the NGO community and to facilitate their participation in these processes in order to be together stronger and more influential, without preventing individual organizations to perform separately.

It has been agreed between the PEBLDS and the ECO-Forum to jointly organize a multi-stakeholder session at the Belgrade Conference to review the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity. It is planned that the 6th Ministerial Environment for Europe Conference will provide a forum to discuss the activities that have taken place so far in the pan-European region to address the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity. The achievements, challenges and needs for the pan-European region will be assessed and recommendations will be made to support the follow up of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity and delivery of the 2010 target by pan-Europe. The lessons learned from the successful implementation of regional, sub-regional, national and local activities should be shared by the stakeholders. The PEBLDS offers a platform for co-operation to facilitate co-ordination and strengthen synergies to reach the 2010 goal. European ECO-Forum supports the urgency and need to put specific attention on the implementation of all agreements and decisions taken in the Environment for Europe process, including both legally-binding and non-legally binding commitments.



What are the commitments?

The overall and most important commitment is to halt the loss of biodiversity – at all geographical levels – by 2010.

In May 2003, the Ministers at the Fifth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Kyiv, Ukraine) took a historic decision and agreed to halt the loss of biological diversity by the year 2010. Governments of the pan-European region agreed to nine “***Kyiv key sub targets***” in seven areas: forests, agriculture, ecological networks, invasive alien species, biodiversity financing, biodiversity indicators and monitoring, and public awareness and participation. Therefore, they are committed to implement actions on the ground for the concrete achievement of these fundamental targets.

Never before the entire pan-European region has agreed to such a far-reaching target, and never before such concrete and focused targets have been set in a joint effort of all countries at the pan-European level, including the European Union (EU), which already agreed in 2001 to halt the loss of biodiversity in the EU. The EU Malahide Message (2004) is the stakeholder response to that commitment and has been followed by a European Commission communication on reaching the 2010 biodiversity targets.

The ***6th Environment for Europe Conference in Belgrade will be held three years before the 2010 deadline***. It will focus on implementation of decisions made in the EfE process. This will be a unique opportunity to assess how existing pan-European regional and sub-regional policies work for biodiversity conservation in the region and how they contribute to meeting the 2010 target.

Actions at the pan European level

PEBLDS Partners have carried out a number of catalytic activities on all geographical levels following the adoption of the PEBLDS. Flagship activities include the development of a pan-European system of protected areas and ecological networks, development of biodiversity indicators, stakeholder activities in the agriculture and forest sectors, a 2010 Countdown Initiative to monitor and profile implementation of commitments, biennial preparatory conferences for the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)¹ and many more.

However, despite all these efforts by countries, the EU, international governmental and non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders, pan-European biodiversity still is declining at a rapid rate. Although ecological networks and the wider countryside approach are crucial for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems – and some successes have been obtained by safeguarding biodiversity in nature areas and landscapes – biodiversity is still at risk in and around these nature areas. In Europe, all major sectors have some effect on biodiversity and the agriculture and forestry sectors seem to have the highest impact in most countries (European Environment Agency, 2003). Farmland birds have dramatically declined over the last decades, as well as waders, even –and especially- in European countries with the highest nature conservation budgets. The European Environment Agency warns that nearly half of Europe’s breeds of domestic animals are at risk of extinction and that important ecosystems continue to be at risk including forests, wetlands, species-rich agricultural habitats, several dry and arid areas and some marine areas (2003) in the European region. Central and Eastern Europe contains Europe’s richest natural capital, including its last great wilderness areas and rich cultural landscapes, but all may be at risk from damaging agricultural, transport and infrastructure development policies².

¹ The Convention on Biological Diversity, ratified by most of the world’s governments, sets out commitments for maintaining the world’s ecological underpinnings as we go about the business of economic development. The Convention establishes three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

² *Quoted by* (WWF International, 2004).

Working towards the achievement of the 2010 target in pan-Europe and the implementation of the Kyiv biodiversity targets cannot be delayed. Many habitats and species will be irreversibly lost if the region will not succeed in achieving these targets. Landscapes are undergoing a silent but dramatic transformation due to changes in agriculture, rapid urbanisation and extension of the transport infrastructure network. Climate change is already having noticeable effects and may result in habitats and species moving north, at a relatively rapid pace. Globalisation forces result in equalizing effects on various landscapes and regional cultures. On the other hand, the demands of citizens in rural and urban areas are growing, and there is a growing emphasis on non-food related services and requirements, such as health care, nature and landscape, recreation, identity, environment and animal welfare. It becomes more and more clear that biodiversity, nature and landscapes are important economic assets for sustainable development in the pan-European region. Economic functions such as agriculture, tourism and water management depend to a high extent on biodiversity and landscape management, and directly and indirectly biodiversity, nature and landscape values contribute substantially to the gross national products of many countries in pan-Europe.

There is a great number of stakeholders whose activities have an impact on biological diversity. Yet only a few of them play a notable role in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the pan-European region. The involvement of all stakeholders from all relevant sectors, including economic and productive, local authorities, trade unions, NGOs and the public, is vital to collectively address the root causes of biodiversity loss in the pan-European region. It is also of critical importance that the entire pan-European community as well as other relevant stakeholders embrace and support, both financially and politically, activities to ensure follow up of the commitments made at the regional and global levels. In this context, it would be essential that interested stakeholders would join the efforts of national authorities, institutions, non-governmental organisations and other partners, to implement the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity.

Structure of the biodiversity session

The PEBLDS, through its Joint Secretariat (UNEP and Council of Europe), together with the European ECO-Forum will proceed to develop the structure of the agenda for the biodiversity session, as well as identify keynote speakers and participants for the presentations. Along with governments, international and national environmental NGOs and networks, regional and local governments (i.e. municipalities), farmers' and landowners' associations, private forest and civil society organisations will be invited to participate at the Conference. The 2 hr session that has been allocated by the WGSO will be divided in blocks with keynote presentations to discuss the following issues (*to be confirmed*):

- Agriculture and biodiversity (lead partners: EEA, UNEP, Council of Europe, ECO-Forum, WWF-International)
- Pan European Ecological Network (PEEN) (lead partners: Council of Europe, ECNC, IUCN, EEA/Paris Topic Centre, ECO-Forum)
- Biodiversity indicators and monitoring (lead partners: Czech Republic, EEA, ECNC, UNEP-WCMC),
- Financing Biodiversity (lead partners: Switzerland, ECNC)
- Communication, Education and Public Awareness (Norway, 2010 Countdown Initiative, ECO-Forum)

The keynote presentations will be focused and brief in order to allow a maximum of discussion between the Ministers and the stakeholders at the session.

Outputs

1. Assessment and evaluation of the implementation of the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity (Category II document, PEBLDS)
2. Technical and political progress report on the Pan European Ecological Network (PEEN) (Category II document, PEBLDS)
3. Strategic paper and stakeholders' recommendations on policies and practices for biodiversity conservation and PEBLDS in Pan-European region (Category II document, ECO-Forum)
4. Case studies and best practices on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the pan-European region (Category III document, ECO-Forum and PEBLDS)